United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General concludes visit to Geneva with meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister, and senior United Nations officials involved in Bosnian issue; departs for official visit to the Netherlands.

+ Samir Sanbar appointed Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, having served as Officer-in-Charge of DPI since November.

+ Bosnian leaders begin fresh round of peace talks in Geneva; Co-Chairmen Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen voice pessimism about outcome, but stress importance of maintaining communication.

+ States parties to International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in vote yesterday, reject participation by Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in current session.

+ FAO appeals for international assistance to prevent spread of locust infestation in north-west Africa; warns that 1994 agricultural production is threatened by re-emerging swarms.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met this morning in Geneva with the Egyptian Minister of Education, Hussein Kamel Bahaa Eldin, and then with the Former Dean of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Jacques Freymond. He later met with senior United Nations officials to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They included Yasushi Akashi, his Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Marrack Goulding, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Chinmaya Gharekhan, his senior political advisor, and Nicholas Morris, Special Envoy for the former Yugoslavia for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali then met with Ambassador Edouard Brunner, his Special Representative for Georgia. Yesterday, Georgia had requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider sending a peace-keeping force to the region, as well as establishing an international commission for the purpose of assisting in the economic reconstruction of Abkhazia.

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Early in the evening the Secretary-General left Geneva for The Hague for an official visit to the Netherlands. While there, he is expected to confer with Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, and to meet with both Houses of the Dutch Parliament. Also scheduled are visits to the International War Crimes Tribunal, the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Samir Sanbar as Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information as of today. Mr. Sanbar had been serving as Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Public Information (DPI) since last November.

Mr. Sanbar served last year as the Secretary-General's Special Representative in charge of the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER). He was Director of the United Nations Information Centres Division from 1987 to 1993, and Chief of the United Nations Centres Services from 1982 to 1987. He has worked with the Organization since 1964.

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The political leaders of the warring factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Presidents of Croatia and Serbia, began another round of peace talks in Geneva today. The talks are being held under the aegis of the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen. Participants are discussing various plans for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most recent of which would give one third of the country's territory to the mainly Muslim Bosnian Republic, half to Bosnian Serbs and the remainder to Bosnian Croats.

Mr. Stoltenberg and Lord Owen were not optimistic after today's meetings, according to a United Nations spokesman. However, the Co-Chairmen felt that it was important that the parties stay in touch with each other and that therefore the talks were necessary.

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States Parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination decided yesterday not to allow the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to participate in their current session at Headquarters. That proposal, made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, was approved by a vote of 69 in favour to 2 against [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Russian Federation], with 25 abstentions.

Speaking before the vote, the representative of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia said he strongly objected to the challenge by his country's participation in the meeting, calling the action legally unfounded and politically motivated. The denial of the Federal Republic's legitimate right

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to participate would imply the suspension of its obligations arising from the Convention. Thus, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination could not ask it to undertake any obligation under the Convention or send any fact-finding missions to its territory. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the Committee's decision, saying that Serbia and Montenegro had not taken measures to give itself any legal standing. He said that allowing the Belgrade regime to participate in the work of the United Nations did "nothing less than to welcome fascism into our chambers".

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The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has appealed for international assistance to prevent the disastrous spread of locust infestation in north-west Africa. Dozens of swarms of desert locusts have appeared in Mauritania, Senegal and southern Morocco, and at current rates of reproduction the locusts will threaten this year's agricultural production in north and west Africa, according to FAO.

Energetic and urgent action by the donor community was needed to prevent the threat from worsening, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf told a meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome attended by representatives from the countries affected, donor countries, the European Economic Community (EEC) and other international institutions. He said it would take a commitment of about $4.5 million by the end of April to maintain the necessary level of locust surveillance and combat operations in north-west Africa. The FAO's appeal last July received a favourable response, but donors were asked then to review their actual assistance programmes and to consider pledging additional aid.

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